Chapter 3

1. Discuss current research that supports biochemical factors, such as nutrition and environment, as a cause of antisocial behavior.

“Meta-analysis of five studies found that elimination diets (consuming polyunsaturated fatty acids) notably reduced hyperactivity-related symptoms and decreased violence. Other studies report vitamin/mineral supplementation in reducing antisocial behavior (Benton, 2007, pp. 752–774) (Hickey 2013, pg. 65).” According to our textbook there is significant research that shows nutrition playing a major factor from fatty acids above to vitamin deficiency as well as testosterone and serotonin levels. According to our textbook and the research that is cited, this all plays a significant role in aggression as well as social behaviors and the tendencies we have.

2. Why is insanity a legal term and not a psychiatric distinction? Explore the various insanity defenses.

The reason why insanity is a legal term and not a diagnosis to the individual is because it can only be applied at the time of the crime. Our textbook states, “the legal system uses the term insanity to define the state of mind of an offender at the time of the offense; offenders may be deemed insane at the moment of the crime and only for that period of time (Hickey, 2013, pg. 71).” If this term were used as a psychological diagnosis, then it would imply that an individual is in a constant state of insanity opposed to at the time of the offense.

There are several different insanity defenses that are utilized such as the M’Naughten Rule where it, “is used to determine if the offender was unable to distinguish between right and wrong as a result of mental disability (Hickey, 2013, pg. 71).” The Brawner Rule, which is the most commonly used, is a combination of the M’Naughten Rule and the Irresistible Impulse Test. The Durham Rule that states, “An accused is not criminally responsible if his unlawful act was the product of mental disease or defect (Hickey, 2013, pg. 72).” Incompetency is another, where the individual lacks the knowledge or ability to comprehend the acts of what they had done and the consequences behind those actions. These are just a few of the insanity defenses that can be used today.

3. Analyze the constant need of psychopaths to be in control of their social and physical environment. Why would a psychopath feel this need?

Psychopaths feel the need for control due to sometimes the lack of self-control in their own life. Therefore they need to fill that desire of control by controlling others and their environment. This is what drives psychopaths, this is the high that they get from controlling others and the environment that they are in. Knowing that there is nothing the victim can do, the psychopath has complete control over the situation and determines the victim’s fate.

4. Contrast nature vs. nurture in understanding violent behavior.
Individuals who grow up in violent homes are often more prone to violent behavior later on in life due to the fact of nature. It is engrained into them at a young age because that is what they grew up in, it is hard-wired into them that violence is an outlet for anger and frustration. Nurture goes along with that as personal experiences growing up in a violent home. Hopefully as they grow older they have different experiences that can counteract or contradict that nature of violent behavior. But unfortunately most of the time what we learn or are taught to us as children (nature) is what we carry with us throughout our life, also our personal experiences (nurture) that build onto and reinforce what we were taught as children is what makes us keep those habits whether they are good or bad.

5. Compare developmental profiles of violent offenders.

For this I compared the profiles of Eric Smith from pg. 83 and Mr. Carter from pg. 100. One of the main things I looked at and seemed to match from both profiles was the father, that he exhibited control or authoritarian over the son. The father also exhibited violence at times whether in the presence of the child or violence to the child. I feel that is one of the major factors, especially to a young boy as they look up to and want to be like their father. I have always believed that a good strong father figure is required in a family and this just reinforces my idea of that.

Chapter 4

1. Discuss how social structure theory provides insight into serial murder.

The social structure theory suggests, “Individuals’ socioeconomic standing, suggesting that poor people commit more crimes because they are stifled in their quest for financial or social success (Hickey, 2013, pg. 107).” So basically what this theory is stating is that because people feel like they fail at accomplishing “the American dream”, they resort to criminal activity or preying off those who have successfully accomplished “the American dream”. They feel inadequate compared to society and therefore make and conform their own rules and lifestyle to live by.

2. Discuss how social class theory explains why male serial killers usually select female victims.

Our textbook states this very clearly, “Caputi states that serial murder is the “ultimate expression of sexuality that defines sex as a form of dominant power; it, like rape, is a form of terror that constructs and maintains male supremacy (Hickey, 2013, pg. 109).” It is a form of power, that men are more powerful and have a higher standing in society than women. Men are looked to as the head of the household and therefore think they should always maintain that image, this is constantly reinforced throughout our society.
3. Describe how the trauma-control model of violent behavior explains the cyclical experience of serial offenders.

The Trauma-control model is a proposed model of how certain traumatic life experiences can potentially develop individuals into serial murderers. These traumatic life experiences include many experiences from physical to psychological traumatization’s and can vary from rejection at a young age as a child to sexual abuse. Although these are not certainties that will lead to a child becoming a serial murder, these traumatic life experiences have happened to many other individuals who ended living a good life.

4. Compare and contrast social construction theories of serial murder.

In our textbook it talks about the different social construction theories from social structure, social class, social process and social control. To a sense I believe these are correct, if we look at cities that are more poverty stricken we see more crime. Because these types of cities lack good jobs for individuals they move to other means of earning or getting the money and tangible goods that they need whether it is through stealing or committing other crimes. One of the theories I find to be most accurate is the Social Control Theory, this theory talks about serial murders and the lack of a relationship they had with their parents and loved ones. It also talks about those that had close family relationships were less likely to commit crimes. I strongly believe this theory is the most accurate as I have personally seen the lack of these relationships leading to individuals seeking that relationship elsewhere with the wrong people where they are then influenced and peer pressured into crime ridden lives.

5. Discuss the relationship between abused children and subsequent violent behavior.

It is seen in most serial murders that they were abused or sexually assaulted as children, this leads too many physical and psychological factors down the road for these individuals as they grow into adults. The psychological factors this plays on those individuals of worthlessness, inadequacy and self-doubt can lead to dissociation. All of this plays a part into rejection by society or groups of individuals which then leads to fantasies of control and power, anger and violence to others.